

642 under Liapchev (1926-31) sought to reduce party strife and international
668 friction. It secured a loan from the League of Nations to help in the settlement of refugees, but seemed powerless to prevent raids upon neighboring states by the IMRO which, after the assassination of Protoguerov in 1928, was dominated by Mihailov who openly defied the Sofia government and virtually reigned supreme in some frontier districts. The elections of June, 1931 brought a shift again to the left. The cabinets of Alexander Malinov and his successor, Nikola Mushanov, both of whom were Democrats representing middle class and intellectual groups, were supported by the Agrarians. This coalition found itself threatened by the rise of the Communist party which nearly captured a majority in the Sofia municipal elections of September, 1932. In the communal elections of November, however, the Agrarians and Democrats won a victory which emboldened them in an attempt to suppress both the Communists and the Macedonians in the following year.

643 Meanwhile Tsar Boris III, had steadily gained in authority and influence. The rapprochement with Italy signalized by the marriage of Boris to
669 the daughter of King Victor Emmanuel III in 1930, and the part played
642 by the Tsar in steps taken toward reconciliation with Yugoslavia and Romania (1933-34) helped to bring him to the fore. Then a series of domestic events enabled the Tsar to make himself a virtual dictator. Colonel Velchev, secretary of the Military League founded in 1930, and Kimon Georgiev, prominent in *Zveno* which was a fascistic civilian organization working for reform and a "strong" government, again helped to stage a *coup d'état*, May, 1934, ousting the Democratic-Agrarian Coalition and making Georgiev premier of a dictatorial government with Velchev as his principal adviser. Parliament was dismissed and political parties dissolved by decree. Vigorous action was taken against IMRO, forcing Mihailov to flee. Most of the promises of the new government, however, and especially the solution of the financial crisis, remained unfulfilled. Velchev's known hostility toward Boris III and his alleged republicanism alienated older army circles which helped to supplant Georgiev by General Zlatev who had the backing of the Tsar. Continued financial mismanagement and a reaction within the army itself to its political activities paved the way for a return to civilian government and the dissolution of the Military League after several of its members, including Velchev, had been convicted of conspiracy. This left Boris III master of the situation, although he proclaimed his intention of restoring constitutional rule.

● 646 Since the anomolous political situation within the country brought an
666 inevitable reaction against the regime, elections for a new *sobranie* were

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eventually held in March, 1938, under a changed electoral law which permitted married women to vote but forbade candidates to run as members of the old political parties. In May, 1938, the *sobranie* met for the first time since 1935, but found itself reduced to the position of a consulting body.

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The political crises of the period after 1933 were but outward expressions of the serious economic condition in which Bulgaria, along with all other predominantly agrarian countries of eastern Europe, had found itself as a result of the world-wide economic depression. At the same time both Italy and Germany sought to bring Bulgaria into their political and economic orbits. Bulgaria for several years seemed to waver between them and their rivals in power politics. Although its refusal to join the Balkan Entente, because of its revisionist territorial claims, seemed to align Bulgaria with Italy, a tense situation was avoided by the signature of a Pact of Friendship with Yugoslavia on January 24, 1937. In 1938 when the east European atmosphere had become clouded because of Germany's annexation of Austria and the developing Munich crisis, Bulgaria gained recognition of the right to rearm by means of an agreement in July with Greece who acted on behalf of the Balkan Entente. This was followed by an Anglo-French loan amounting to ten million dollars to assist in Bulgarian rearmament, although Germany had already supplied much material toward this end. Nevertheless, Germany had two advantages over its rivals. One was its freedom to encourage Bulgarian revisionist ambitions which, after the Bulgar-Yugoslav pact, tended to create greatest tension with Romania over the Dobruja. The other was the powerful economic tie developed between the two countries by means of trade agreements. After Austria and part of Czechoslovakia had been incorporated in the Nazi Reich in 1939 about 52 per cent of Bulgaria's exports went to Germany and about 63 per cent of its imports came from there.

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It is doubtful, however, if the developing ties with Germany influenced the feelings of the Bulgarian people. Tsar Boris and his governments, even though they sanctioned agreements by which the political police co-operated with the Gestapo in pursuing "Communists," sought to keep down native fascism. There was, moreover, very little antisemitism in Bulgaria. The political opposition composed of the former Agrarian, Liberal, Radical, Socialist, and Democratic party elements, was by its nature antagonistic to Nazism. And, finally, the people had always retained a deepseated feeling of sympathy and respect for Russia against whom the Nazis were ostensibly aligned. Indeed, right down to 1941 there was much ground for believing that Bulgaria might well maintain neutrality in the second World War.

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EDUCATION

there were more educated persons in the countryside there would be less inducement for the educated to congregate in towns. 871 369

It is an erroneous view to believe that Bulgaria is suffering from overeducation. What Bulgarians have a right to complain of is rather of a maldistribution of educated forces. It was the political system which rendered politics the best and easiest career to earn a livelihood, and thereby attracted the intellectuals to this mode of life. Politicians in their turn fostered this tendency since they utilised this intellectual proletariat from which to recruit their partisans. 871

M. Jordan Tabakov in his book "The political situation of Bulgaria after June 9", affirms that on questioning fifteen deputies elected while Stambuliiski was Prime Minister, it was found that eight had not read the Constitution and seven had read it partly, and yet all had taken the oath to govern after its spirit and to defend it! None knew what the capitals of Czechoslovakia and Switzerland were. When asked whether they considered themselves fit to be deputies, some admitted that they were not, for they had not received the requisite education, while some considered themselves worthy of the posts they held since "the people had chosen them". Dr. D. Gabrovski in his "Illiterate Bulgaria," affirms that: the percentage of illiterate voters in 1920 was 52%, and that the statistics of 1928 show that the percentage of illiterates in the country was 40%. Many who have been to school, and had later lived in an uncultured environment could no longer read. Of the total population, only 2000 to 3000 read books, and about 30,000 nothing else save newspapers. School attendance was not very satisfactory. In the year 1929-30 there were 727,670 children of school going age, but of these only 670,872 attended school, while another 37,139 dropped off during the course of the year. Those who 871 646 • 212 871